

# There's no business like show business

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Back in the 1950s, when the Lab transitioned from the Manhattan Project to Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, the community was still relatively isolated and needed to provide its residents with entertainment. As such, it had a movie theater (possibly in two different locations over time, according to a couple of old maps) and the Museum was recently gifted with an old movie projector that may have been used there.

Complete with a Laboratory property number, the equipment (a Simplex E-7 35mm movie projector) dates from 1950s. There is some information that its projection lamp might actually date back to World War II. The lamp, from the Strong Electric Company, is a "Victory" model, but not much more is known.

The Museum was offered two projectors, since they were used in pairs ([see information in italics below from the American Society of Mechanical Engineers](#)), but we only took one due to the sheer size of the equipment.

*Prior to the 1960s, projectionists used a changeover system. Reel one would be fed through the projector, containing what was currently playing on the screen. Reel two would be in the second projector, and the projectionist would peer out of a [sic] one of the port holes in the projection booth waiting for a cue, usually a blinking dot in*

*the corner of the screen. This first cue would tell the projectionist to turn on projector number two.*

*Further past that cue there was another cue that would tell you to shut off projector one and turn to number two which would make it a seamless transition. So you [the viewer] thought that it was continuous,” Rivierzo says. The projectionist would then have to load the third reel onto projector number one, and the process continues until all of the reels were played. Then, all of these reels had to be manually rewinded [sic] for the next show.*

It is believed that the projector was used for entertainment, rather than viewing technical films, but information on its background is hazy. If you think you might have relevant information to share (whether it's about the equipment itself or its use), please send it to our artifacts specialist, Wendy Stohmeyer, at [wstrohmeier@lanl.gov](mailto:wstrohmeier@lanl.gov).

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